

ON A GREEN SLOPE

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MARY ROBERTINE STOKES





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ON A GREEN SLOPE

Poems by

MARY ROBERTINE STOKES



RICHARD G. BADGER

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TO MY MOTHER

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*“To seek a little and enjoy it much,
Ah! this were wealth beyond a Midas Touch,
The bee within the blossom of a weed
Can sip the very cup of Gannymede.”*

ON A GREEN SLOPE

It is as if I trod sweet Sicily
This emerald slope beside the sapphire bay,
Where brown herds browse and white sheep nib-
bling stray;
Where clover blooms arrest the wandering bees,
And piped song comes out from tilting trees
When, Daphnis-like, the wind a lyric frees.

MAURICE THOMPSON

(In Memoriam)

Nature in requiem winds and pine-harp's woe
Laments the lover of her hermit mood;
She pledged him with the gift of freedomhood
And led him where her harbored sweets o'erflow.
With bow half-drawn and pulsing heart aglow,
He paced the mazes of the untrod wood,
Harked the wild notes of buried solitude
And knew the art of centuries ago.

He leaned o'er pools where misty dreamlights
hung,
And fingered all the wandering, tenuous strings
Of green earth's shy and subtle palpitings;
Re-sung the lays that thicket lyrists sung,
Found the white way to paradised delight,
Marking the path with feathered arrow flight.

DAPHNIS AND MENALCAS

Met on a range of fruited trees
Two rival pipers stand,
The Mocker gray, a champion bold,
A Thrush clear-eyed and tanned,
Their match of song doth leap and thrill
With ardor, challenged-fanned.

AN ORCHARD SLOPE

An orchard slope, verdured in April green,
Where gnarled old apple trees flower-laden lean;
A slender peach tree with pink bloom ablaze,
And suntouched barns breaking through sapphire
haze

That blurs the harshness of yon furrowed hill,
(The blue haze hath a way of softening ill.)
High in the tree a robin's Marsian flute
And old dreams stirring at the heart's deep root.

Old dreams, old dreams, blue haze and opal bloom,
These charm today and mist the human doom:
Far down the slope I see the flowers go free,
The mold's strong locks yield to the West wind's
key;
Across the field again light lyrics ring—
My heart gives thanks for April green and Spring.

WHEN WOOD AND FIELD—

When wood and field are filled with fragrant herbs,
And yellow bees above white clover croon;
When slender stems sway in the hazy noon
And on the land is all the charm of June—
Then on the hills, tending a flock of dreams,
I know all sweets that olden shepherds knew
In pastures deep beneath the curving blue;
Go anise-crowned with gray care out of view,
Loiter in paths that scent and song pursue.

JOY OF THE OPEN

O that idle hour with the world debarred,
On the open way with butterflies starred!
In the rifts of red top bees were rife,
We tasted too o' the sweets o' life;
Drank from a sparrow's spring of song
That bubbled where bent grass was long;
Of precious blooms we clasped full hands,
Sundrops, wild rose, hedge bindweed strands.
The silver swallows circled fleet,
Fresh winds, Etesian winds did sweep
Over the timothy, up the wheat—
We plunged in emerald waves heart-deep,
And down day's slope there flowed for us
The honey of Mt. Hymettus.

THE SUNNY PASTURE

When morning-glory blooms are folded tight,
Round chicory stalks is furled each azure flag,
High with song's zest, here merry thousands lag
To chant and chime the alchemic power of light;
Butterfly wings like golden batons beat,
Timing the score for minstrel myriads hid,
Beetle's oboe, cymbals of katydid
Sound through the breeze's leafy laughter sweet.
A lark drops in and fills a moment's hush
With one clear note. Wild into deeper grass
With trembling trample and with rasping rush
Go frightened grasshoppers fleeing as I pass,
Out above all the cicada's violin—
Loitering, I love it in the idle din!

A SUMMER DAY

Light haze on creek and river, golden noon on the
bar,
Sun on warm waters sparkling, star after star;
Into the ears a crooning, a low silvery sound
Where winged waves come playing along the
sandy ground;
I've a sense of delight about me, a joy in line and
hue—
The curve of yellow shore and rhythmic sweep of
blue.
Out of the sands the wild bean, with seed pods
summer-ripe,
Along the edge of a tide-pool there runs a slender
snipe;
About the snagged driftwood the hum of a fellow-
like bee,
And just overhead the calling, the calling of fleet
kildee:
No vain and eager reaching, no wonder of any-
thing,
Only idle alertness to what blue ripples sing.

THE BROOK

(In April)

Between these banks of sloping green
Where are waters bright with pebbles met,
Sweet, gleeful music's heard harp-set
To unisons unguessed;
So like some rippling melody,
Of lip and flute confessed,
When Life and Laughter meet amain
The pathway of old dream again.

TO A ROBIN SINGING AT NOON

High in the emerald garden of a tree
Enchanting notes the summer silence break,
Wild haunting strains sung for thy loved mate's
 sake;
Wild strains and exquisite, from memory
Of shared delights that are of field and lea,
Spun gold that sunshine through the mist will
 make,
The sparkling hues dew on the rose will take,
The low, rich lyric of a passing bee.

So I do think when ecstasies divine,
Flower wefts that wakefulness or sleep doth spin
Bitter and sweet that quivering sense entwine;
Moods to set tinkling mirth's gay mandolin,
Thrilled wistful man, listening, intense, apart,
'Twas you, you woke the first song in his heart!

THE FIRST OF APRIL

Outside my window, deep and low,
The flurried rain silverly gleams,
And violets blue already blow
Around the purlieus of my dreams.

A gust of song about the eaves,
O'er treetops gray a flare of leaves,
And soon bewintered sense will be
Flower-charmed in Spring's periphery.

SONG

My heart is for Kent's long hill slopes
When the clover's coming down,
For her roads full of wild roses
That lead far out from town.

Out on the long green leagues
Where the clover blooms have scope,
A light mist flying over
And its Hey! for heart and hope.

When the pulse of exulting June
Beats fast in the ether blue,
A dull gray world's made over
And your own pulse beating too!

For miles and miles to be wending,
Then the halting beneath the trees,
Where the dancing leaves are piping
Their gleeful melodies.

There's a brown bird on the fireweed
And its light song sprays the air,
O dream in the heart is a song-bird
That eases life of care.

Then it's haste to be up and over
Green hills that are sloping down,
On white roads that run through sweet
clover
To wend far out from town.

MID-NOVEMBER DAY

The summer's embers still unquenched,
 Were stirred by morning's hand
In woodland brasiers wide and deep,
 And warmed the open land.

We cast in heart-free haste away
 The clasping cares that press,
The autumn air was breath of balm,
 The creek was silentness.

Down from the haze encircled dome
 Light streamed with opaline glow,
Laving the idle boats, the fykes,
 The cabins gray and low.

Beyond the bar a soft sail hung
 White in the wind's release,
Was it a sign, a truce to moil,
 The oriflamme of peace?

For through the fallow field of day
 No furrowing noise did gride,
And Bedioun birds stayed southward flight
 On ether uplands wide.

Moveless we watched in wood and air
 The beauty born for blight,
Till sense grew in the stillness, sad,
 And wide-eyed in the light.

Across the light a long, black scar,
And o'er the pale chrome bar
Dark flocks flown in came crowding fast
Where low green cedars are.

Upon no sound some rent gold leaves
A gust of grief did fling,
A line of wild geese, far in the sky,
Seemed winter heralding.

SONG SPARROW

The late song sparrow's a toiler brown
Who blithely plods along,
Sprinkling the pastures Autumn dried
With freshening showers of song.

ALONG THE ROAD

I journey with the morning, hand in hand,
The charm of mist makes lovelier the land;

The white road runs wild garden banks between
Far, far across the acres rich and green.

With bended head I bathe wide eyes in dew,
This tincture makes the worn old world seem new.

I hold the grass and strengthen in its glee
And join it in its saltant ecstasy,

And praise it for the power its cheer doth hold,
Like love in life to hide the must and mold.

The roses wild are here in vagrant ease,
All dawn-suffused and flushed with imageries;

Right rudely seems the milkweed's stalk upthrust,
Like hand that pushes bold through custom's
crust.

Just by the fence and there beyond the trees,
The daisies go in genial companies.

I mark the roadside's fragile denizen—
The ruby-hearted flower of moth mullein.

Brave in the dust whose home should be the lea,
Smiles the fair face of sapphire chicory.

The morn is sweet, and discontent and ill
Are dark shapes fading on the emerald hill.

OVER KENT'S FALLOW FIELDS.

Over Kent's fallow fields
Wandering the clover goes,
And the perfume borne on the breeze
Is sweeter than scent of the rose.

O, sweeter than scent of the rose
Who would not tarry and dream?
Marsh blackbirds down in the grass
Sing of the meadow stream.

Red-berried vines dew-wet,
The grace of blue in the sky,
Sun where the sheaves are set,
Shade where the white flocks lie,

Mirth and delight that flee,
Here is an end to the quest,
Brown lark, and robin, and bee,
Light song, and laughter, and rest.

SONG

Song is a crystal mint

For the coinage of golden mirth,
Where nuggets of laughter are brought
From all the veins of birth.

SUMMER EVENING

Pale purple light of dying day
 Flushes the open lane,
As up the narrow ivory way
 The herd goes home again.

The honey sweet of new cut hay
 Upon the air is cast,
The cattle's perfumed breath out-blows
 As home they hurry past.

WHEN SKIES ARE FULL OF OPALINE HAZE

When skies are full of opaline haze
 And breezes blow the blue-green oats,
When laborers singing till the maize
 From morn to eve, and all bird throats

Are slender Panic pipes become;
 When cows bite lawns where sun is laid,
And fleecy flocks lie down where some
 Old tree doth pitch a tent of shade,

An idle sense, far straying, bids
 A glimpse of those sweet times sylvan
When shepherd life looked out 'neath lids
 Of peace on slopes Sicilian.

In mellow June beneath the trees,
 When song of leaf and wind are blent,
Deep in the grass, at shaded ease,
 I'm charmed from all lament.

THESE DEAR OLD FIELDS OF KENT

These dear old fields of Kent, how sweet they
seem

In the long rose days when the real is dream;

The tillage sloping east, the pasture reaching
north,

The open lanes between, green lanes that bid you
forth.

The silver on the leaves, the clover in the mist,
The light Acadian troll of winging lutanist;

Along an orchard's path the fireweed's orange
flare,

Upon a mood's gloom the illumine of turquoise air.

What reverie of blossoms mid the grass and grain,
Yarrow, daisies, primrose and blue and white
vervain;

And oh! the nameless flowers that bloom and blow
away,

The new stubble's gold, attar of heaped hay.

These dear old fields of Kent, how sweet they
seem

In the long rose days when the real is dream;

Far wafted scent and sound, pure essences and
free,

Distilled in the heart make song's nectary.

THE BILLOW

Far out at sea, far from the golden sand,
Thou risest lightly from the emerald tide
With haste of royal wave; doth song abide
In thy breast too, that thou woulds't reach the
land?

Behold! thou art gone ere half the space is spanned:
What was thy urge across the mad profound?
Woulds't plumb the poignant potency of sound,
Woulds't leave thy life's song spoil upon the
strand?

TO LIFE—

From every mystic pathway
The gifted and the great,
Pressed o'er the bars of Silence,
Have loosed their tongues for Death;
But thy gold and purple glamour,
In the dreaming Heart's estate,
Through weeping and through laughter
I have seen with bated breath.

A SONG OF THE WIND

When robins wing o'er the leagues of spring,
And daffodils arise,
When the golden light breaks the winter's night,
Shall we hearken the wind that sighs?
The far sky is blue the whole day through,
No cloud o'er the hilltop lies,
New green has sway o'er the cold brown clay,
But the warm wind sighs and sighs.

When wheat is astir and brown larks whirr
From fields to left and right.
When light song flows in the apple close,
Shall we hear swift wings in flight?
The violets rise but the warm wind sighs,
The wind that is a wing for song,
It comes and goes and a yearning knows
The wind that sighs day long.

EARTH-BOUND

Today is beauty's own,
Her breath is on the grass,
Here have her flower wings flown,
Unresting wings that pass.

Softly the light winds blow
Over the wheat and grass,
Along the melic way
White daisies lift and mass.

The gold wheat glides away
To meet the silver grass,
They greet as lovers may,
Gold wheat and silver grass.

The day is a golden close
Bound by a drowsy mist,
And I see not beyond the rose
For this veiling amethyst.

Man asks e'en bent in prayer
If after life's as bright,
Breathes rapture and despair
Longing for clearer light.

This golden mist would seem
What beauty in her might
Has gathered of human dream
For crying heart's delight.

Softly the light winds blow
Over my soul that saith,
“Thank God for gold life bound
By this sweet blue air of breath.”

GUARDIAN ANGELS

He hath given His angels charge over thee,
Life, that thy path be fair,
“Pray, who may the guardian angels be?”
Faith names them Work and Prayer.

ARBUTUS

How like some precious little rhyme
 Upturned where men gray tomes revise,
O'er winter-withered paths of time
 Its breath of fragrance flies.

THE BLUEBIRD'S SONG

Hark! upon the air
And drifting down to me,
A trill divine, the violin's note
In the song of eternity.

And down the apple lanes
That blossom bridges span,
This clear note rings to stir
The flagging hope of man.

PAIN

When Life would hold her henchmen safe,
Gold-barred with fete and jest,
Time opes the door with his skeleton key
And steals their treasure, zest.

YULE THOUGHT

Peace is the glowing candle
Christ sets on Life's white board tonight,
All men He hath invited
To feast beneath its light.

A WINTER VIEW

Thin as a web a silken mist doth poise
On silvern air not warm nor overcold,
And golden frost stars sparkle like true joys
Far o'er the rime's encompassing freehold.

Phantasmally at portal of a cloud
The silence stirs at each footfall of sound—
An axstroke in the deep wood singing loud,
Snapped icicles falling on the frozen ground.

Pensive against the low horizon line
Stand the fair cedars veiled in mystic gray,
Silent as nuns with thought of things divine,
Before the vast white altar of the day.

ECHO

As daily from some mount of mind
Forbidden knowledge man would find,
Though clear words quickly reach his ears
His uttered speech alone he hears:

It is as on this wooded height
When sound of silence seeks new light
On mysteries dark, though answers ring,
How futile all the parleying.

SUMMER NOON

The white sun waits midway the sky
Over the land of noon,
From the tall tree no murmuring sigh
Falls, or light wind tune,
The wide fields pale and swoon
With heat of noon;
The long, cool shadows shrink
Beneath the light of noon,
Now, to the pond's bright brink
The tired team hastes, to drink
The rest of summer noon.

THE WIDE FIELDS THRILL—

The wide fields thrill with light and scented haze,
Sweet gum and shrub spice all the woodland ways;
How fair again the world around us seems,
How fair the world, my heart throbs thick with
dreams,
Dreams that would voice what no tongue ever
said
Of loved earth's trance—the roses rambling red,
The warm gold trembling on the path I tread—
White locust bloom's a cloud within my reach,
White locust bloom doth silence me of speech.

AH! CHRIST, COULD LIFE BUT SEE—

Ah! Christ, could Life but see
The broad way built by Thee,
All hand in hand might pass
To the Far Land's softer grass
By Thy span of charity.

ON FINDING A MOCCASIN FLOWER
IN THE PINWOOD

Far in a Pineland close,
Deep in the quiet dim,
Frailer than fair wood-rose

What is thy whim?
What calleth thee
Out of the laughing light
Into the Pineland's night?

O! dream heart,
In a world apart,
Frailer than fair wood-rose
Flower of the soul's close
Blown in the spirit's dim,
What is thy whim?

VILLANELLE OF SPRING

Come, Heart, the carols ring
Where apple boughs are white,
This way is merry Spring!

We'll greet the blossoming,
The new green and the light,
Come, Heart, the carols ring!

The open lanes we sing
Dogwood and violets dight,
This way is merry Spring!

Give dull complaint swift wing
Into the lull of light,
Come, Heart, go wandering!

A lilac hour we cling
To white boughs of delight,
This way is merry Spring!

Time glooms with opened wing
All but Hope's blossoms bright,
This way is merry Spring!

CONVOLVULUS

Its fair pink blooms and tender vines
The gray fence posts enshroud,
Its purple mass upon the grass
Is rich as lustered cloud;
Some subtle pleasure, deep and sweet,
Falls on me in this place,
E'en as a wearied throng
Hath thought of song,
Glimpsing a maiden's idle grace.

HEART'S FIELD

White flowers of thought here droop with sorrow's dew,

A little stream of laughter twinkles through,
Dreams overhead pass in immortal flight—
Gray doves winging in the quiet light.

WELLS

When crystal springs on land run dry,
Clouds pass with no showers fraught,
Bright water from earth's mystic deeps
To parching lips is brought.

That sparkling song may ever leap
When springs of dream are naught,
Into the well of silence deep
Speech sinks a shaft of thought.

VIOLETS

Beneath the sod a potter lone
Did toil the winter through,
That man in May might quaff delight
From little cups of blue.

DREAMS

Dreams are petals of a rose
Grown afar,
Mood and Thought in Mystery's close
Its gardeners are.

SOLITUDE

For Thought and Silence wed
 'Tis Eden's garden old,
As doves Speech here is fed
 With Fancy's crumbs of gold.

THE LAPIDARY

Earth's generations come and go
With sighs and tears and laughters light,
Passing down the streets of Time,
These opals, pearls and diamonds bright
They bring unto the Singer's door,
Who there, intent, above the strife,
Resets these heirlooms in our House of Life.

*“To barter a song for gold is loss,
For the song is gold and the gold is dross,
Who hath the gold, let him bear his cross.*

*To sound the harp for a lasting name
Is to sell one's love to a life of shame,
Art is eternal, but what is fame?”*



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